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# What We Believe

## Session 3: "Read and Reflect"

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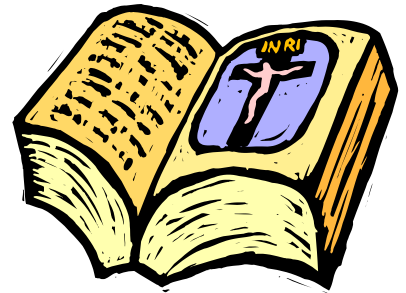
### *Life with God*

### *The Bible*

#### WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

- 1) The Bible is not just a book about God. It is the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

John 10:27, "My sheep listen to My voice."



- 2) The Bible is God's main way of communicating \_\_\_\_\_ with us.

John 6:68, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

- 3) The Bible is the vehicle of the \_\_\_\_\_.  
If you want to dwell with God, dwell in His Word.

John 6:63, "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."

**God is speaking.  
Are you listening?**

# WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?

1) Although the Bible was written over the course of 1500+ years by more than 40 people, it has but one Author: the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

*2 Peter 1:20-21, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*

- God used His 40+ writers - their experiences, intelligence, memories, personalities, etc. - in such a way that what they wrote was, in its entirety, the Word of God.

*John 20:31 "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."*

2) Therefore, the Bible is correctly called "God's Word".

The Bible is God's Word about \_\_\_\_\_ not man's word about \_\_\_\_\_.

*1 Thessalonians 2:13, "And we also thank God continually because, when you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the Word of God..."*

- Real human beings were given real words from God to write down. Just as our Lord Jesus was both true God and true man, so the Bible is truly the Word of God and also the writing of human beings. And just as Jesus took on human flesh free from sin and error, so God used human beings to provide a written revelation of Himself that is free from error.

*Galatians 1:11-12, "I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ."*

3) The Bible is accurate.

a) It is accurate \_\_\_\_\_

- Not one archeological discovery has contradicted the Bible.

b) It is accurate \_\_\_\_\_

- There are more than 5,000 copies of the New Testament from the early centuries of the Church. It is the single best documented text in existence.

c) It is accurate about \_\_\_\_\_

*Hebrews 4:12, "Whatever God says to us is full of living power, exposing us for what we really are."*

## **THE BIBLE IS POWERFUL!**

The Bible changes hearts, changes minds, changes lives.

1) It is the power to \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus and His will.

*2 Peter 3: 18, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*

*2 Timothy 3:16-17 "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

2) It reveals the power for \_\_\_\_\_.

*Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."*

3) It is the power of \_\_\_\_\_.

- The Bible is our source of bottom-line truth. What will be the basis for your knowing? What will be the lens through which you understand the world? What is your starting point for truth? What will you trust?

John 8:31-32, *"If you hold to My teachings, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

- The Bible is also the antidote to worry. Meditate on His truth; eliminate your worry. *(If you can worry you can meditate! Worry is mulling over something bad. Meditation is mulling over something good!)*

4) It is the power in spiritual \_\_\_\_\_.

Ephesians 6:12, *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil..."*

- What is the only real weapon the devil has? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is our weapon? The \_\_\_\_\_, which is the Bible.  
Ephesians 6:17, *"...the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."*
- In a battle would you want a stickpin or Excalibur?

## WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO READ MY BIBLE?

It is so **BIG!!!!** Where do I start?

1) Unlike any other book, *don't* start at the beginning.

Start with the Gospel of \_\_\_\_\_.

2) Be \_\_\_\_\_. By dwelling in His Word every day, insights will come more quickly.

Remember: the goal isn't for you to get through the Bible, but for the Bible to get through you.

3) It's not about how *much* you read. Simply read until something catches your attention then dwell there. That "something" is probably "\_\_\_\_\_." 😊

4) It's not about understanding everything, but learning from \_\_\_\_\_ what He wants us to receive \_\_\_\_\_.

Matthew 11:28-29, "Come to Me... learn from Me..."

5) What is the best way to interpret the Bible? Let the Bible interpret the Bible. Although helpful, be cautious of reason or tradition.

1 Corinthians 4:6, "Do not go beyond what is written."

## BIBLE FACTS 101

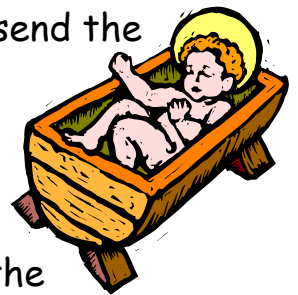
1) The whole Bible exists to first *foretell* and then *announce the arrival of* and finally *to lead all people to trust Jesus as their Savior.*

John 5:39, "These are the Scriptures that testify about Me."

2) The Old Testament was written before the birth of Jesus.

Its primary focus is:

- the telling of the history of God's interaction with His people
- and the foretelling of the coming Messiah/Savior.
- It is not the history of the faithfulness of people to God, but of the faithfulness of God to His people and His promise to send the Savior.
- It was originally written in **Hebrew**.



3) The New Testament was written to announce the arrival of the Messiah/Savior, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. Its primary focus is

- the life, death and resurrection of Jesus

- and for people who read it to come to a saving faith in Jesus.

*John 20:31, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."*

- It was originally written in **Greek**.

#### 4) The main characters:

- **Adam and Eve:** the first man and woman created, the first sinners, the first redeemed. The promise of a Savior was first given to them.
- **Noah and his wife:** God's judgment and saving grace
- **Abraham & Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob** (*whose name was changed to Israel*): the patriarchs of God's chosen people Israel. Abraham received the promise that through him would come the Savior of all people. Jacob was the father of twelve sons who would become the twelve tribes of Israel.
- **Moses:** Called by God to lead His people out of the slavery of Egypt, which gives us a picture of what the Savior would do for all people. The one who received the ten commandments and Law of God.
- **King David:** Descendant of Abraham, King of Israel, through him God would bring the Savior.
- **The Prophets:** through them God foretold His judgment on sin and grace in the Savior.
- **John the Baptist:** the last of the prophets, the one who prepared the way for Jesus.
- **The 12 disciples:** followed Jesus for three years, were taught by Him, and witnessed all that happened. When Jesus rose from the dead and the Holy Spirit was sent, each one became bold in his faith and all but John were killed for their faith.
- **Paul:** Jesus called him as a disciple after Jesus had already ascended, was used by God to spread the Gospel to the ends of Roman civilization.

# A NEW & BETTER LIFE IN OBEDIENCE

1) What do you think of when you hear the word "obedience"?

- Do you think of \_\_\_\_\_?
- Do you think of \_\_\_\_\_?
- Do you think of \_\_\_\_\_?

Isaiah 48:17-18, *"This is what the Lord says, 'I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to My commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea."*

2) Obedience is not following a rule. Obedience is following a \_\_\_\_\_.

John 14:5-6, *"Thomas said, 'How can we know the way?' Jesus answered, 'I am the way...'"*



- We can trust the Way even though we may not know the way.

3) When you obey, you will find out Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_.

- The main thing missing in many people's relationship with God that keeps them from experiencing His reality in their lives is obedience.
- Step out and you will find out that He is already there.

# OBEDIENCE: OPTIONAL OR ESSENTIAL?

- 1) God's laws are not options or recommendations. They are expressions of His heart and being. To violate a law of God is to violate God. You're not violating a principle but a \_\_\_\_\_.
  
- 2) In addition, God gives these laws to us because He loves us and wants the best for us. He is our Father. Therefore you're no violating a rule but a \_\_\_\_\_.
  
- 3) God's laws are also how life works. If we violate them, there are consequences. It does not matter if we agree with the laws (Him) or even acknowledge them they are still true.
  - An example from nature: There is the natural law of gravity. It does not matter if we agree with the law of gravity or even acknowledge it. It is still true. And if we violate the law, we will get hurt. Just ask the man who defiantly jumped a cliff! ☺
  
- 4) All this is why, when we violate a law of God, both God and we are \_\_\_\_\_.
  
- 5) The Bible often refers to the consequences of obedience and violation as "blessings" and "curses."

*Deuteronomy 11:26-28, "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse-- the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today..."*

  - This curse that comes from disobedience is not God "getting us back" for going against His will, like an immature child would. The curse is simply the \_\_\_\_\_ of our going against His will.



- Tired of bearing the consequences of disobedience? Tired of being lost, frustrated, unfulfilled, dissatisfied, in trouble, in strained or broken relationships? Then try a new and better way! The consequence of obedience!

John 13:17, *"Now that you know these things, you will be **blessed** if you do them."*

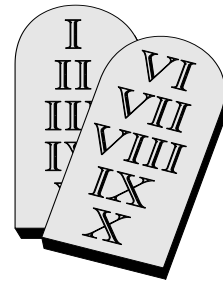
Luke 11:28, *"**Blessed** are those who hear the word of God and obey it."*

## **WHERE DOES THE POWER TO OBEY COME FROM?**

- 1) Really, this is **STILL** the same kind of question we've been asking all along: "Where does my salvation/faith come from?"
- 2) Does our salvation/faith come from God or us? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) So, where does our power to obey God come from, God or us?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Do you want to live a life of obedience? Start spending more time with Jesus.

# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

(From Exodus 20) Small Catechism page 54



1) You shall have no other gods besides Me.

- This is the first and most important commandment. If we have God first in our lives, the other nine commandments will follow.

1 Peter 3:15, "*But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.*"

2) You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

- How we use His name reveals the depth of our relationship with Him.
- The general misuse of language:

Ephesians 4:29, "*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*"

Ephesians 5:4, "*Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*"

3) Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

- We were not created to work all the time. To be relationally, spiritually, emotionally, and physically healthy we need one day a week to rest and reconnect with God, family, and friends.

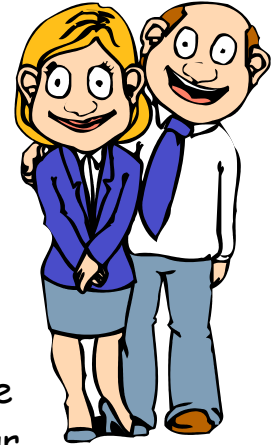
Acts 2:46-47, "*Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*"

**He who burns the candle at both ends is not as bright as he thinks.**

4) Honor your father and your mother.

*Exodus 20:12, "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you."*

- This commandment is the anchor for the final seven commandments. If we get this one right, the rest follow. If we get this one wrong, we are on our way out as a nation.



5) You shall not murder.

*Psalms 139:13-16, "For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place... Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be."*

The different types of murder:

- a) Homicide
- b) Suicide
- c) Euthanasia (*so called mercy killing*)
- d) Abortion

What about capital punishment or military service?

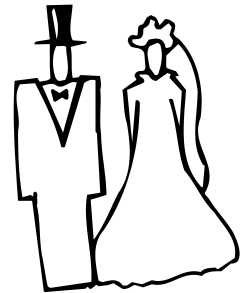
Although the Bible does not encourage wars or capital punishment, it does acknowledge the governments' responsibility to protect its citizens from foreign aggressors and criminals. Therefore, neither military service nor capital punishment are viewed as wrong insofar as they are carried out for the higher good, and within the laws of the land. See Romans 13:1-7



6) You shall not commit adultery.

- Having sexual relations with a person outside the covenant of marriage is out of God's order and a sin.
- Sex is not just physical and emotional, it is spiritual.
- Living together outside of marriage in a sexual relationship is sin, and living together even while remaining abstinent is a very poor witness to your faith.
- Marriage is to be between one man and one woman.

*Genesis 2:24, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."*



1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Romans 1:26-27

7) You shall not steal.

8) You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

What if I have a concern about someone? *(see Matthew 18:15-20)*

9 & 10) You shall not covet anything.

Coveting is wanting something so badly that sinful thoughts begin to rise in your heart.

**The summary of law:**

*Matthew 22:37-39, "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"*

# Prayer

## WHAT IS PRAYER?

1) Prayer is \_\_\_\_\_ the true God in the name of Jesus.

Jeremiah 29:13, "*You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.*"

John 14:6, "*No one comes to the Father except through Me.*"



2) Prayer is \_\_\_\_\_ with God (*no talking necessary!*).

Luke 5:16, "*Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*"

- Is prayer a way to build a relationship or deliver a to-do list?
- Be real with God and God will be real to you.

3) Prayer is speaking \_\_\_\_\_ God. That means we talk, then we \_\_\_\_\_.

Matthew 6:7, "*And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.*"

4) Prayer is allowing God to \_\_\_\_\_ us.

Psalms 139:23, "*Search me, O God, and know my heart.*"

5) Prayer is purposefully putting your \_\_\_\_\_ into His hands: Your family, your health, your needs, your dreams, your difficulties, your desire to be useful to Him, your decisions...

1 Peter 5:7, "*Cast all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.*"

6) Prayer is asking your Father whatever you wish.

Philippians 4:6, "...present your requests to God."



7) Prayer is allowing your \_\_\_\_\_ to be molded to His.

After Jesus had been wrestling with His Father in prayer, He said, "Yet not as I will, but as You will." (Matthew 26:39)

8) We pray more confidently when we know God's \_\_\_\_\_.

- The more you know of what God has said, the more confidently and expectantly you will be able to pray.

9) Being regular in prayer is how we learn to recognize the Shepherd's \_\_\_\_\_.

John 10:4, "...and His sheep follow Him because they know His voice."

10) Prayer is an \_\_\_\_\_ not a wrench.

James 5:16, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."



- Therefore be persistent. Persistence is not pestering. Persistence is staying plugged into the power and effectiveness of God!

12) What if we no longer know what to pray?

Trust the \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 8:26-27, "In the same way the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us... in accordance with God's will."

13) You will never learn \_\_\_\_\_ to pray until you \_\_\_\_\_ to pray.

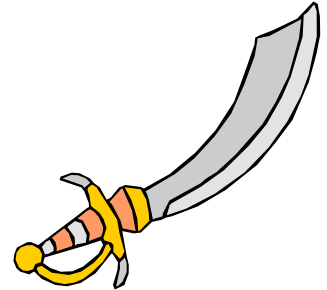
# FOR FURTHER GROWING

From "Luther's Small Catechism"

- The Ten Commandments pp.54-101

## SHARPENING MY SWORD

Each week you will be given a sentence or verse of the Bible to put to memory. The Bible calls God's Word "the sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17). We want you to have a big, sharp sword!



So far:

**Ephesians 2:8-9**

**"Jesus died on the cross and rose again for the forgiveness of my sins."**

**Colossians 3:13**

This week:

**"Faith comes from hearing the message." Romans 10:17**